



**THE SECRETARY OF COMMERCE**  
Washington, D.C. 20230

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May 6, 2004

The Honorable Barbara A. Mikulski  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Mikulski:

Thank you for your letter regarding the privatization of the Fire Protection Group (FPG) at the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST). I appreciate hearing from you and welcome the opportunity to respond.

As you know, our focus is to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of our organizations while maintaining a safe environment for our employees. The safety of NIST's employees and the people in the surrounding community are of paramount importance. After having consulted with the Montgomery County Fire and Rescue to discuss fire protection service for the NIST Gaithersburg Campus and given the nature of research conducted at the NIST Gaithersburg Campus, NIST has decided to reclassify the NIST FPG function from "Commercial, Available for Competition" to "Commercial, Not Available for Competition."

Thank you for contacting me regarding this important issue. If you have any further questions, please call me or Brett Palmer, Acting Assistant Secretary for Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs, at (202) 482-3663.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Donald L. Evans", is written over the word "Sincerely,". The signature is stylized with large, sweeping loops.

Donald L. Evans